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1
     IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR TENNESSEE
                   FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT
 2
                      NASHVILLE DIVISION
 3
    JANE DOE,
 4
           Plaintiff,
                                          No. 3:20-CV-01023
 5
    v.
                                          Jury Demand
    THE METROPOLITAN
                                          Judge Trauger
    GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND
                                          Magistrate Judge
 7
    DAVIDSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE
                                          Holmes
    AND DR. ADRIENNE BATTLE
                                          Lead Case
           Defendants.
 9
    DR. LILY MORENO LEFFLER,
10
             Plaintiff,
11
    v.
12
    THE METROPOLITAN
    GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND
13
    DAVIDSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE,
    AND DR. ADRIENNE BATTLE
1 4
             Defendants.
15
16
    DR. JAMES BAILEY,
    DR. PIPPA MERIWETHER, and
17
    DR. DAMON CATHEY,
18
            Plaintiffs,
    v.
19
    METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT
20
    OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON
    COUNTY, TENNESSEE and
21
    DR. ADRIENNE BATTLE,
2.2
              Defendants.
23
24
    The Deposition of:
                          BRIAN MELLS
                           April 13, 2022
25
```

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
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9	Briggs & Associates 222 Second Avenue North, Suite 340M
10	Nashville, Tennessee 37201 (615)714-5350
11	
12	
13	
1 4	
15	
16	
17	
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
23	
2 4	
25	

```
1
               The deposition of Brian Mells was taken by
    counsel for the Plaintiffs, by notice, via remote
 2
    means, in Nashville, Tennessee, on April 13, 2022,
    pursuant to the provisions of the Federal Rules of
 3
    Civil Procedure.
               All formalities as to notice, caption,
 4
    certificate, reading and signing of the deposition
    are not waived. All objections, except as to the
 5
    form of the questions, are reserved to the hearing.
 6
 7
    APPEARANCES:
 8
    For the Plaintiffs:
       Dr. James Bailey
       Dr. Lily Leffler
10
       Dr. Pippa Meriwether
       Jane Doe
11
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2.2
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```

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21	
22	
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25	

```
1
                         BRIAN MELLS,
 2
    called as a witness and, having been first duly
 3
    sworn, was deposed as follows:
 4
    EXAMINATION BY MS. STEINER:
               State your full name for the record?
 5
         Q.
              Brian Jeffrey Mells.
 6
 7
         Q.
              And, Mr. Mells, what is your home address?
 8
              I can't hear you that well. You have an
 9
    echo coming on.
              Home address? What is your home address?
10
         Q.
11
                          , Smyrna, Tennessee.
         Α.
12
         Q.
              How do you spell that?
              MR. FOX: Ms. Steiner, it's a little hard
13
1 4
    to hear you.
                 (Off-the-record discussion.)
    BY MS. STEINER:
15
16
              Dr. Mells, can you hear me?
         Q.
17
              I can hear you.
         Α.
18
         Q.
              Now, where do you live?
19
         Α.
                          , Smyrna, Tennessee.
              How do you spell that?
20
         Q.
21
         Α.
2.2
         Q.
               Then ?
23
              Yes, ma'am.
         Α.
24
              Do you have any plans of moving in the
25
    near future?
```

```
1
          Α.
               Yes, ma'am.
 2
               Where are you moving to?
 3
               I don't know the address of our house.
                                                           Ιt
          Α.
 4
    is being built. I don't know the address.
 5
               Where is it being built, what county?
          Q.
 6
          Α.
               Rutherford.
 7
          Q.
               Do you know the road it's own?
 8
          Α.
               Repeat that.
          Q.
               What road is it on?
10
          Α.
11
          Q.
               And what part of Rutherford County is it
12
    in?
13
               Murfreesboro.
          Α.
1 4
          Q.
               Okay. Are you married?
15
          Α.
               Yes.
16
          Q.
               What is your wife's name?
17
          Α.
               Rochelle Mells.
18
          Q.
               Where does she work?
19
          Α.
               Fortis Institute.
20
          Ο.
               Where?
21
          Α.
               Fortis Institute.
22
          Q.
               How do you spell that?
23
               F-O-R-T-I-S.
          Α.
24
               Where is that located?
          Q.
25
               Nashville.
          Α.
```

- Q. Now, do you know when approximately you're going to move into your new home?
- A. Approximately the end of the summer, but it could be different.
- Q. We're going to try this case starting

 December 6th, okay? And we will probably be issuing subpoenas in advance, okay? And so then if we can't -- Dr. Mells, can you hear me? I can't hear you.
- A. Yes, ma'am.
- 12 your nearest relative that you would have?
- A. My wife.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

10

1 4

- Q. And does she have any plans of leaving Fortis Institute in the near future?
- 16 A. Not in the near future.
- Q. What about by the end of the year?
- 18 A. Not by the end of the year.
- Q. Okay. Now, Dr. Mells, I'm Ann Steiner and I represent four of the plaintiffs in this lawsuit.
- 21 | I represent Dr. Pippa Meriwether, Dr. Lily Leffler,
- 22 | (name spoken off record) who we're going to call
- 23 | Jane Doe, okay, and Dr. James Bailey. And Jesse
- 24 | Harbison is here, too, and she represents Dr. Damon
- 25 Cathey. We've all -- all the plaintiffs have sued

```
1
    Metro schools for retaliation, okay?
 2
               Now, we're going to ask you a whole bunch
 3
    of questions today. If you do not understand my
 4
    question or if you can't hear my question, let me
 5
    know immediately and we'll make sure that you
 6
    properly understand it, because I don't want to get
 7
    into trial and have you say, well, I couldn't hear
 8
    your question. You need to let me know today, okay?
         Α.
               Okay.
10
               Now, have you ever given a deposition
         Q.
11
    before?
12
         Α.
               Yes.
13
         0.
               How many times?
14
         Α.
               Once.
15
               What type of case?
         0.
16
               Repeat that question.
         Α.
17
               What type of a case?
         Q.
18
         Α.
               I don't know what type of a case it was.
19
         Q.
               Why did you have to give a deposition?
20
         Α.
               I was on staff at a school.
21
         Q.
               Was it a Metro school?
2.2
         Α.
               Yes.
23
         Q.
               Do you recall what you were asked
24
    questions about?
25
               Asked questions about a student.
         Α.
```

```
1
          Q.
               And what about that student?
 2
          Α.
               Was any neglect found with that student.
 3
               Was it a federal claim?
          0.
               I don't know.
 4
          Α.
 5
               Okay. Did you testify that there was
          Q.
 6
    neglect with the student or there was not?
 7
               There was not.
               So there was not anything Metro schools
 8
    had done wrong with regard to that student that you
10
    testified to, correct?
11
          Α.
               Correct.
12
          Ο.
               Do you recall what he testified?
13
          Α.
               No.
               Do you recall who opposing counsel was?
1 4
          Q.
               I don't remember the name.
15
          Α.
               Was it a male or a female?
16
          Q.
17
               Male.
          Α.
               Was it Gary Blackburn?
18
          Q.
19
          Α.
               No.
20
          Ο.
               Was it Stephen Crofford?
21
         Α.
               No.
2.2
          Q.
               Okay. Do you recall who represented
23
    Metro?
              I don't.
2.4
          Α.
25
               Do you recall the year of the testimony?
```

1 Α. No. 2 Q. What school did it involve? 3 Pearl Cohn. Α. What was your position at Pearl Cohn? 4 0. 5 Α. Assistant principal. Who was the principal? 6 Q. 7 Α. Sonia Stewart. 8 0. Now, have you ever accused Metro schools of retaliation? 10 Α. No. 11 Have you ever accused Metro schools of any Q. 12 form of discrimination, whether it be based on race, 13 sex, age, national origin against either you or 1 4 anyone else? 15 Α. No. 16 Have you ever been involved in any claim Q. 17 or allegation against Dr. Battle's brother, Coach 18 Battle? 19 Α. No. 20 Are you related or do you have any sort of 21 an association with anyone else who has engaged in 2.2 some sort of protected activity based on their race, 23 sex, age or national origin? 2.4 Could you repeat the question. Α.

Do you have any association or connection,

1 for instance, best friend, relative who has accused 2 Metro schools of any sort of discrimination? 3 No. 4 Okay. Now it's my understanding that 0. yesterday you were named teacher of -- principal of 5 6 year; is that correct? It was on Monday evening. 7 8 0. Who picked you for that, was that Dr. Battle? 10 I don't know how the selection process is 11 completed for principal of year. 12 Ο. Do you know whether or not Dr. Battle has 13 the final say as to who is principal of the year? 1 4 I don't know the selection process. 15 Did anyone tell you why you were picked as 0. 16 principal of year? 17 Α. No. 18 Q. Now, how did you come about interviewing 19 for principal of White's Creek? 20 Α. I was selected after I applied for the 21 position. 22 Q. Did anyone request that you apply for the 23 position? 2.4 Α. No. 25 Q. Who interviewed you?

```
1
         Α.
               Who -- there was a lot of people on that
 2
    interview. I don't know.
                                There were some teachers.
 3
    I don't know their exact names.
                                       I can't remember
 4
           There were some community partners.
 5
    were central office staff. I had two interviews,
 6
    yeah.
 7
               Okay. Do you know whether or not anyone
 8
    at Metro schools keeps track of who interviews you?
               I don't know.
 9
         Α.
10
              Do you know whether or not you were
         Q.
11
    scored?
12
         Α.
               I don't.
13
               Now, I want to ask you a little bit about
1 4
    your career. Where did you go to college?
15
               University of Tennessee.
         Α.
16
         Q.
               When did you graduate?
17
         Α.
               2006.
18
         Q.
               Where are you from?
19
         Α.
              Memphis, Tennessee.
20
         0.
               Did you go to the public school system
21
    there?
2.2
         Α.
               Yes.
23
               What year did you get out of high school?
         Q.
24
               2002.
         Α.
25
               2002. Okay. So what was your degree from
         Q.
```

```
1
    UT?
 2
         Α.
              Bachelor's of science and mathematics.
 3
              And then where did you go?
         Q.
              To college after that?
 4
         Α.
 5
         Q.
              Yes.
              I went to Trevecca Nazarene.
 6
         Α.
 7
         Q.
              What was your degree there?
              Master's in education leadership.
 8
         Α.
              Do you have a PhD or any other further
         Q.
    education?
10
11
         Α.
              Yes.
12
         0.
              What?
13
              I have Ed.S in curriculum and instruction
    and an Ed.D in curriculum and instruction.
1 4
15
              When did you graduate from Trevecca and
         Ο.
16
    get your master's?
17
         Α.
              2000 -- I don't want to give you the wrong
18
    date.
19
         Q. Can we break for just ten seconds? Off
20
    the record.
21
               (Off-the-record discussion held.)
2.2
    BY MS. STEINER:
23
              Dr. Mells, where did you get your Ed.S?
         Q.
24
         A. Carson-Newman University.
25
              Is that in eastern Tennessee?
         Q.
```

```
1
         Α.
               Yes.
 2
               Was it -- did you go there to attend or
 3
    was it online?
 4
               Online.
         Α.
 5
               Okay. When did you get your two degrees
 6
    from Carson-Newman?
 7
               I don't want to quote you incorrectly.
 8
               Just about. I'm not going to hold you to
         0.
    it.
10
              Okay. 2016 and 2017 sounds like the right
         Α.
11
    dates.
12
         Q.
              Okay. When did you start working for
13
    Metro schools?
               January of 2007.
1 4
         Α.
15
         Ο.
               What was your position?
               Mathematics teacher.
16
         Α.
17
         Q.
               What grade?
18
         Α.
               Ninth grade.
19
               What school?
         Q.
         Α.
20
               Hillwood High School.
21
         Q.
               How long did you stay at Hillwood?
22
         Α.
               Six school years.
23
               What was your last position at Hillwood?
         Q.
24
               Mathematics teacher.
         Α.
25
               That was 2007 through 2013?
         Q.
```

```
1
          Α.
               The school years end, so it was kind of --
 2
    it was 2007 to 2012. 2007 was still in the middle
 3
    of a school year.
 4
               And so in 2012, where did you go?
          0.
               Pearl Cohn.
 5
          Α.
               What was your position at Pearl Cohn?
 6
          Q.
 7
          Α.
               Assistant principal.
 8
          Ο.
               How long did you stay assistant principal
    at Pearl Cohn?
10
          Α.
               Four years.
11
          Q.
               Then where do you go?
12
          Α.
               Madison.
               You went to Madison about 2016?
13
          Ο.
1 4
          Α.
               Yes.
15
               Now, when you were at Pearl Cohn, was that
          Q.
16
    a priority school?
17
          Α.
               Yes.
18
          Q.
               Who was the principal?
19
          Α.
               Sonia Stewart.
20
          Ο.
               Sonia Stewart?
21
          Α.
               Yes.
22
          Q.
               And who is the current principal at Pearl
23
    Cohn?
24
               Miriam Harrington.
          Α.
25
               Is Pearl Cohn still a priority school?
```

- 1 A. No, ma'am.
- Q. Pearl Cohn is no longer a priority school?
- A. That's correct.
 - Q. Are you sure?
 - A. Positive.

4

- Q. When did it come out of priority status?
- 7 A. Don't quote me. I don't know the exact 8 year.
- 9 Q. I want to show you an Excel spreadsheet
 10 that was given to me by Metro schools. I'm going to
 11 share this with you. Can you see this?
- 12 A. Yes.
- Q. Okay. This is a list of the schools that
 were priority schools at Metro. If you go down here
 to Pearl Cohn, it says it's been a priority school
 from 2014; do you see that?
- 17 A. Yes.
- 18 Q. But you're telling me it is no longer a
 19 priority school?
- A. Correct.
- Q. Because this does not show, I do not
 believe -- this shows, it says it's been a priority
 school from 2014 through the present date. Are you
 telling me that it's not?
- A. Correct.

```
1
         Q.
              And what year did it come out of priority
 2
    status?
 3
              I don't know the exact year.
 4
         Q.
              Okay.
 5
              MS. STEINER: Let's have the spreadsheet
 6
    marked Exhibit number 1 just for identification
 7
    purposes.
 8
                         (WHEREUPON, the
                         previously-mentioned document was
10
                         marked for identification as
11
                         Exhibit Number 1.)
12
    BY MS. STEINER:
13
              Do you recognize this spreadsheet?
         Ο.
1 4
              MR. FOX: No objection.
15
    BY MS. STEINER:
16
             Do you recognize this spreadsheet, Dr.
17
    Mells?
18
         Α.
              No. I haven't seen this spreadsheet
    before.
19
20
         0.
              Now, I'll ask you one question. Do you
21
    know if Maplewood is on the priority school list?
2.2
         Α.
              Yes.
23
              What high schools are currently on the
         Q.
24
    priority school list?
25
              Maplewood and White's Creek.
```

```
1
         Q.
               Is Madison Elementary where you were at,
 2
    was that on the priority school list when you were
 3
    there?
 4
               I was not at Madison Elementary.
               What school were you at?
 5
         Q.
               Madison Middle School.
 6
 7
         Q.
               Madison Middle School, was that on the
    priority list?
 8
 9
         Α.
               Yes.
               Do you know if it's currently on the
10
11
    priority list?
12
         Α.
               Yes.
               What does being on the priority list mean?
13
         Ο.
1 4
               Means that the school is the bottom
15
    5 percent of the state.
16
         Ο.
               Does that sometimes have a lot to do with
17
    the schools that feed into the school that priority?
18
         Α.
               It could.
19
         Q.
               Meaning right now, you're at White's Creek
20
    and it's priority, correct?
21
         Α.
               Correct.
22
         Q.
               And the schools that feed into White's
23
    Creek, do those tend to be priority schools?
2.4
               Yes.
         Α.
25
               What are some of the schools that feed
         Q.
```

```
1
    into White's Creek?
 2
               Haynes, Brick Church, I.T. Creswell.
               And are those priority schools?
 3
         0.
              Not all.
 4
         Α.
 5
         Q.
               Which ones are priority?
              Haynes and Brick Church.
 6
         Α.
 7
         Q.
               So the Creswell is not priority?
         Α.
               Correct.
               Which ones feed in the largest number of
         Ο.
    students to White's Creek?
10
11
              Haynes is number one, and I don't want you
12
    to quote me, so I can't tell you who is number two
13
    between the other two.
1 4
              Now, when you're getting these students
15
    that are coming in from priority schools, as a
16
    practical matter, does that mean they are a little
17
    bit -- they are behind in terms of learning, those
18
    students who are feeding into other schools like
    Hillwood or Hillsboro?
19
20
         Α.
              Could be.
21
               So then when they feed into your school,
22
    you've got a lot of catching up to do with those
23
    students, correct?
2.4
              Yeah.
         Α.
```

Now, Dr. Bailey has told me that some of

```
1
    the kids who came to White's Creek when he was there
 2
    were actually coming out of the criminal justice
 3
    system; do you have that going on?
 4
         Α.
               Yes.
 5
               And would you agree that it's very
 6
    difficult to try to teach kids who have such a bad
 7
    start in life?
 8
               I would disagree.
               But it is more difficult than kids who are
         Ο.
10
    feeding into the schools like Hillsboro, correct?
11
         Α.
               I disagree.
12
               Now, as a -- when you were at Madison
         Ο.
    Middle School, it was priority, too, correct?
13
14
         Α.
               Correct.
15
               And it still is today, correct?
         Ο.
16
         Α.
               Correct.
17
               Do you know whether or not it's made any
         Q.
18
    improvements in its priority status?
19
         Α.
               Yes.
20
         Ο.
              How?
21
         Α.
               What do you mean, how?
2.2
         Q.
               How can you tell it's improved?
23
               Based on the state data.
         Α.
24
               Now, for the state data that you've got
         Ο.
25
    there, was there any testing done for the year 2020
```

```
in the spring? Do you recall when COVID hit?

A. No. There was no testing.
```

- Q. No testing. Okay. So then was it possible to tell whether or not a school was on priority status or off priority status in the year 2020, the spring?
- A. Yes.

3

4

5

6

7

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

- Q. How?
 - A. The state gives you a designation still.
- 10 Q. So you still got designated, but what was 11 it based on?
- 12 A. Previous years' data.
- Q. So if you were priority from the previous year, you were priority for that year, correct?
- 15 A. Correct.
 - Q. So even if the kids may have learned more and gotten out of priority status, because there was no testing, you wouldn't know that, correct?
 - A. Could you repeat that question?
 - Q. For 2020, it's my understanding, based on your testimony, that if a school was priority for 2019, into 2019, they stayed whatever designation they had at the end of the 2020 because there was no testing, correct?
- 25 A. Correct.

```
1
         Q.
               So if you were priority in 2019, you
 2
    stayed priority for 2020, correct?
 3
         Α.
               Correct.
 4
               If you are non-priority for 2019, you
         Ο.
 5
    stayed non-priority for 2020, correct?
 6
               Correct.
         Α.
 7
         Q.
               Okay. So what is your age?
               37.
 8
         Α.
         Q.
               What's your date of birth?
10
         Α.
               May 21st.
11
         Q.
               What year?
12
         Α.
               1984.
13
               What math did you teach, what type of
         Q.
1 4
    math?
              All of them.
15
         Α.
16
              Algebra, geometry, advanced?
         Q.
17
               Algebra, geometry, Algebra II,
         Α.
18
    foundations, bridge math.
19
         Q.
               Now, was it -- who was your executive --
20
    who did you report to when you were at Madison
    Middle?
21
2.2
         Α.
               Which year?
23
               The last year. 2020. 2019, 2020.
         Q.
24
         Α.
              Renita Perry.
25
               Who would give you your evaluations?
         Q.
```

1 Α. An executive director. 2 Q. Ms. Perry? 3 Correct. Α. Do you recall what your score was for the 4 0. 5 2019, 2020 school year? No, I don't. 6 Α. 7 Ο. Can you look it up real quick? Do what? Α. Can you look it up on your computer really Q. quick to see what it was? 10 11 It was listed as a partial year exemption, 12 P.Y.E. 13 What does that mean? 0. I don't know the State language behind it, 1 4 15 I just know that it means I don't have any 16 evaluation scores for that year. 17 So for the year 2019, 2020, you had no Q. 18 evaluation? 19 It's called partial year exemption. 20 0. Did you ask for that? 21 I think every educator in the state of 22 Tennessee had an option to do a partial year 23 exemption that year. 24 Q. And would you do that because you could X 25 out that score?

```
1
         Α.
              No.
 2
         Q.
              Did you ask for the partial year
 3
    exemption?
 4
              No. We all were given the option. I
    don't remember the exact -- if you had the option
 5
 6
    that year, I don't remember. But I know it's a
 7
    partial year exemption for that year.
 8
         0.
              If you have an option, that indicates to
    me you can choose whether you want to take it or you
 9
10
    don't want to take it; is that correct?
11
         Α.
              Correct.
12
         Q. And you chose to take the partial year
    exemption, correct?
13
1 4
              I'm not sure if it was a partial year
15
    exemption.
16
             And you can't recall whether or not you
         Q.
17
    took the partial year exemption?
18
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
19
              THE WITNESS: I don't know what you're
20
    saying.
21
              MR. FOX: Mr. Mells, did you say
2.2
    something? Can't hear you.
23
              THE WITNESS: I don't know what you just
24
    said.
```

MR. FOX: I just said, objection to the

```
1
    form, and Ms. Steiner might have a response.
 2.
    BY MS. STEINER:
              Dr. Mells, that's for the Court.
 3
 4
    Mr. Fox makes an objection, you still need to
 5
             That's for the Court to look at later,
 6
    okay?
 7
         Α.
              Okay.
 8
         0.
              Could the court reporter read back my
 9
    question?
10
               (Requested portion of record read.)
11
               THE WITNESS:
                             I'm not sure if it was an
12
    option or if we all got partial year exemption.
    BY MS. STEINER:
13
14
              So do you believe then that it is for the
15
    2019, 2020 school year that all the principals
16
    for -- throughout Metro were given a partial year
17
    exemption, meaning they were not scored on their
18
    performance?
19
              I don't know.
20
         Ο.
              Is that what you mean, though, that if it
21
    was given across the boards, then that nobody was
2.2
    scored?
23
         Α.
              Say that one more time.
24
              What do you mean by a partial year
         0.
25
    exemption given across the boards, what do you mean
```

```
1
    by that?
 2.
              Because the tornadoes hit and then COVID
 3
    hit, we did not have a closeout evaluation.
 4
              So then there was no evaluations about the
         Ο.
    performance of the principals, whether it be grade
 5
 6
    school or high school for the spring of 2020,
 7
    correct?
             I did not have an evaluation for spring of
    2020.
10
              Now, did you have an evaluation for the
         Q.
    fall of 2019?
11
12
         Α.
              Yes.
13
         Ο.
              What was your score then?
              3.29.
1 4
         Α.
15
              What was the score for your school then?
         Ο.
16
              There was no score for the school that
         Α.
17
    year. There was no testing.
              So for the whole 2019, 2020 school year,
18
         Q.
    your school was not scored, correct?
19
20
         Α.
             Correct.
21
         Q. And the school score, what is the range
22
    typically on that?
23
         A. It varies, depending on what you're
24
    speaking about.
25
              The one that comes on the evaluation that
         Q.
```

```
1
    you get, where it's got your score and it's got
 2
    school score, what's the --
 3
              One to five.
         Α.
 4
         0.
              And is your score, as well, one through
 5
    five?
 6
         Α.
              Yes.
 7
         Q.
              And 3.29, how does that rank?
 8
         Α.
              Just a little bit above expectations.
              That was for the fall of 2019?
         Ο.
10
         Α.
              Correct.
11
              Can we have that, could you provide that
         Q.
12
    to your attorney and we're going to mark that
13
    Exhibit Number 2 to your deposition today.
1 4
                         (WHEREUPON, the
15
                         previously-mentioned document was
16
                         marked as Exhibit Number 2.)
17
               THE WITNESS: Say that again?
18
              MS. STEINER: Could you provide your
19
    evaluation to Brook Fox? We're going to have that
20
    marked Exhibit Number 2 to your deposition today,
21
    okay?
2.2
              MR. FOX: Brian, is that something you can
23
    e-mail pretty easily?
24
               THE WITNESS: I can figure it out.
25
    sure I can.
```

```
1
              MR. FOX: E-mail to me and I can e-mail it
 2
    to opposing counsel and the court reporter, make
 3
    sure they have it as an exhibit.
                                       That's Number 2?
 4
              MS. STEINER: Yes.
    BY MS. STEINER:
 5
 6
              Now, Dr. Mells, the 3.29, does that
 7
    reflect your job performance as the principal at
 8
    Madison Middle?
         Α.
              It's a portion.
              Okay. What else would be used to reflect
10
         Q.
11
    your job performance, other than your score?
12
              Student academic performance, teacher
         Α.
13
    panorama data.
1 4
              Let's go back. How did you score for the
         Ο.
15
    2018, 2019 school year?
16
         Α.
              Level four.
17
              How did you score for the 2017, 2018
         Q.
18
    school year?
19
         Α.
              Level two.
20
         0.
              And for the 2017, 2018 school year, what
21
    was your position?
2.2
         Α.
              Madison Middle School principal.
23
              What does a level two mean?
         Ο.
24
         Α.
              Not meeting expectations.
25
              Who was your executive director?
         Q.
```

1 Α. Oh, boy. Let me take myself back a 2 minute. You say 2017, 2018? 3 Ο. Yes. That would be Latricia Gloster. 4 Now 2018, 2019, who was your executive 5 Q. 6 director? 7 Tracy McPherson. 8 0. Did Ms. McPherson resign or retire from Metro schools; do you know? 10 I believe -- I don't want to be quoted. Ι 11 don't know. 12 Okay. Listen. What is your knowledge Q. 13 about whether or not Ms. McPherson, why she left Metro schools? 1 4 15 Α. I don't know. She never told me. I don't 16 know. 17 Did you ever hear from anybody? Q. 18 Α. No. 19 Q. So you never heard any reason whatsoever, 20 under oath, about why Ms. McPherson is no longer at Metro schools? 21 22 Possibly retired, possibly resigned. 23 Don't know which one it was. 24 Q. Now, when you said you were a level four

for 2018, 2019 school year, do you mean 4.00 was

```
1
    your score?
 2
              That was not my evaluation score, that was
 3
    the score that you're referring to, that includes
 4
    student data.
 5
              What was your score for 2018, 2019?
         Q.
               4.05.
 7
         Q.
              What was your evaluation score for the
 8
    2017, 2018?
              3.10.
         Α.
10
              You said two, what does that mean?
11
    Earlier you said two; what is that?
12
         Α.
              That includes student data.
              What's an override on these scores?
13
         0.
1 4
              What scores are you talking about?
         Α.
15
              What can you override the score -- do you
         Ο.
16
    have the ability to toss out the score?
17
         Α.
              No.
18
         Q.
              Okay.
19
         Α.
              I don't know what that means.
20
         0.
              What is an LOE score?
21
         Α.
              That's the score that includes student
2.2
    data.
23
              What was the -- could we have the 2017,
24
    2018 evaluation for you that we've discussed marked
25
    Exhibit Number 3, and the 2018, 2019 evaluation
```

```
1
    marked Exhibit Number 4, if you could provide those
 2
    to Mr. Fox, Dr. Mells. Is that okay?
 3
               MR. FOX: No objection.
                         (WHEREUPON, the
 4
                         previously-mentioned documents
 5
 6
                         were marked as Exhibit Numbers 3
 7
                         and 4.)
 8
    BY MS. STEINER:
               Now, Dr. Mells, what was your score for
         Q.
10
    the 2020, 2021 school year?
11
         Α.
              Level two.
12
         Q.
              What was your personal score?
               3.35.
13
         Α.
1 4
         Q.
              Who was your executive director?
15
         Α.
              Dr. Chae Snorten.
16
              And when you say level two, what was the
         Q.
17
    two score, what was that score?
18
         Α.
               It was including student data.
19
         Q.
               What was it, was it 2.00?
20
         Α.
               I gave you the evaluation score.
21
         Q.
              Evaluation score was what, because I'm a
2.2
    little confused here. What was the evaluation
23
    score?
24
         A. 3.35.
25
              Is that your score?
```

1 Α. That's my score. 2 When you put the students in there, when 3 you add the student scores in, what's the score? The two. 4 Α. 2.00? 5 Ο. Uh-huh. 6 Α. 7 Ο. Is that a yes? Α. Yes. That's the only thing I'm going to stop Q. 10 you on, because I understood what you said because I 11 could see you nodding, but when the court reporter 12 is trying to type it up for the record, she can't 13 understand it. We won't be able to understand it 1 4 later, so any time you do that, I'm going to stop 15 you and say, is that a yes or is that a no, for the 16 record, okay? 17 Α. Yes. 18 Now, let's have your 2020 through 2021 19 evaluation marked the next-numbered exhibit. 20 MR. FOX: No objection. 2.1 (WHEREUPON, the 2.2 previously-mentioned document was 23 marked as Exhibit Number 5.) 2.4 BY MS. STEINER: 25 Can you tell me why the student scores

pulled it down to a two?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

10

11

12

13

16

17

18

19

- A. This was virtual school. We would have students taking a test virtually and in-person, bringing the students in. It was that COVID year.
- Q. So then you had difficulty with the scores because the kids were taking the testing remotely?
- A. You had students taking the tests in-person who had never been in the building before, because they had the option of being remote, and so some students attended class, students didn't attend class, so test scores did plummet -- they didn't plummet, test scores did better than pass, but they did not do as well.
- 14 Q. That's because the kids were coming back
 15 into the school?
 - A. We were hybrid last year, so you had some in the building, some not in building.
 - Q. Did the kids do better when they were in the building or when they were remote?
 - A. On?
- Q. Testing?
- A. Not at White's Creek, but probably in other schools, yes.
- Q. They did better testing remotely?
- 25 A. Our test scores at White's Creek went up

```
1
    the last school year compared to the time they were
 2
    tested.
 3
              So last time they were tested?
              The last year was what, 2020, 2021, so
 4
    2019, 2020. Was it 2018, 2019; is that right?
 5
 6
              Now --
         Q.
 7
              Yeah, 2018, 2019.
              The 2.0, the 2.00, does that include your
 8
         0.
    evaluation score of 3. --
10
         Α.
              You faded out.
11
              Does the 2.00 take into contract your
         Ο.
12
    score of 3.35?
13
         Α.
              Yes.
              And so then if you have your 3.35 in
1 4
15
    there, you have to have -- you're the math major,
16
    you have to have something to counteract that to
17
    have the average be 2, correct?
         Α.
18
              Correct.
19
         Q.
              What's counteracting your 3.35?
20
         Α.
              I would have to go back in and look to
21
    determine that.
22
         Q.
              It has something to do with the scores,
23
    though, correct?
2.4
              Correct.
         Α.
25
         Q. So then the scores would have to be, to
```

```
1
    come out 2.00, the scores would have to be somewhere
 2
    around 1.65, correct?
 3
              Not necessarily.
              But that's the math results, correct?
 4
              I don't know if it's 1.65 or not. I can't
 5
 6
    say correct.
 7
              But you had something that would have been
 8
    lower than 2 with regard to the scores to have the
    average be 2, correct?
10
         Α.
              Correct.
11
              So you've got your 3.35 added into some
         Q.
12
    other figure that ends up being 2, correct?
13
         Α.
              Correct.
1 4
              And what is your understanding about why
15
    Dr. Bailey was removed from White's Creek?
16
             I did not have any conversations about
         Α.
17
    that.
18
         Q.
              Were you at Metro schools, and I know you
19
    were, when the issue arose about Dr. Battle's
20
    brother, Coach Battle?
2.1
         Α.
              Yes.
2.2
              What do you recall about that?
23
              That was an incident between Dr. Battle's
         Α.
24
    brother and a parent.
```

Q. What type of an incident?

1 Alleged that there was physical 2 altercation. 3 And what is your belief about what you 4 heard? 5 I don't have one. I wasn't there. 6 Q. Do you know Dr. Battle? Do you personally 7 know her? I wouldn't say personally. I know her as 8 director of schools. 10 Do you know Coach Battle? Q. 11 Α. Say that one more time. 12 Ο. Coach Battle? 13 Α. Yes. I know him as a coach. He's a 1 4 coach. 15 How long have you known Coach Battle? 0. 16 Α. Whenever he became the coach of White's 17 Creek, I don't know what year, but that's my first 18 time meeting him. 19 Ο. How did you meet him if you were at 20 Madison? Did you go to --21 Α. I was at Pearl Cohn when I met him. 22 Q. Okay. Did you get along well with Coach 23 Battle? 24 Yeah. We didn't have any interactions Α.

outside of when I would have to work the games at

```
1
    White's Creek.
 2
             Are you aware of the -- hang on one
 3
    second. See if I can find this.
                                       I am not still
 4
    sharing the screen, am I? I'm going to -- when we
 5
    break, I'm going to pull this document out and I
 6
    want to ask you about something.
 7
              Were you aware that Coach Battle was
 8
    nonrenewed by Dr. Bailey at White's Creek?
         Α.
              No.
              No?
10
         Q.
11
         Α.
              No.
12
              Did you see any of the disputes that arose
         Q.
13
    about Coach Battle and whether or not he should be
    removed from White's Creek?
1 4
15
              The dispute? Could you clarify what
         Α.
16
    disputes?
17
              The Facebook posts or any of the issues
18
    that arose at the school board meetings about Coach
    Battle?
19
20
         A. No Facebook posts.
21
         Q.
              Okay. Have you ever gone out to dinner or
2.2
    lunch with Coach Battle?
23
         Α.
              No.
24
         Q. Did you know that Coach Battle was trying
```

to be hired back at Metro schools?

25

1 Α. No. 2 Do you know where Coach Battle is now? 3 I believe he's a basketball coach at a 4 private or charter school, private or charter, I 5 don't know which one. When's the last time you saw Dr. Battle? Q. 7 Α. Dr. Battle? 0. Coach Battle. I don't know. Α. 10 Q. Was it within the past month? 11 Α. No. 12 Q. Past year? No, I don't think so. 13 Α. 1 4 Have you ever had any conversations with Q. 15 Coach Battle -- with Dr. Battle about her brother? 16 Α. No. 17 Do you know what your evaluation score is 18 for this school year? 19 No. Well, I mean, for the first semester, Α. 20 but we don't have it yet. 21 Q. What was the score for your first 2.2 semester? 23 Α. 4.07. 24 What was the school score? 0. 25 Students haven't been tested. Α.

```
1
         Q.
               Who is your executive director for this
 2
    year?
 3
              Dr. Chaerea Snorten.
 4
              I'd like that evaluation marked the
    next-numbered exhibit.
 5
 6
                         (WHEREUPON, the
 7
                         previously-mentioned documents
                         were to be marked Late-filed
 8
                         Exhibit Number 6.)
10
              MR. FOX: No objection.
    BY MS. STEINER:
11
12
              Dr. Mells, do you know how these students
         Q.
    have scored for the 2021, 2020 school year?
13
1 4
               Repeat that again.
15
               Do you know how the students have scored
         0.
16
    for the 2021, 2022 school year?
17
         Α.
               Scored as compared to what?
18
              How they have scored for this report card
19
    type deal, the evaluation, do you know what their
20
    scores are going to be?
2.1
         Α.
              Yes.
2.2
         Q.
               What?
23
               That would be -- I would have to go find
         Α.
24
    that information for you. I don't have that off the
25
    top of my head.
```

1 Q. Do you know approximately how they are 2 going to score? Can you give me an approximate 3 amount? No, I can't. 4 5 Is it 2.0, is it 3.0, is it 1.0, do you Q. 6 have any idea? It's not -- the scores don't come like 7 8 that. Well, there's some score that you've been Q. 10 telling me about that you got a 2.0 last year, correct? What is that score called? 11 12 Α. Let me see what was selected the last 13 school year. School composite. 1 4 What is the school composite for this year Ο. 15 going to be? 16 Α. I don't know. 17 Is it true that you cannot figure that out Q. 18 until you actually get the scores back from the 19 State? 20 Α. Correct. 21 So anything that you could give me today 22 would just be a guess, correct? 23 A. Correct. 24 Q. Now, do you think White's Creek will stay 25 a priority school?

1 Α. No. 2 Q. Do you think you're getting out of 3 priority status? Possibly. 4 Α. Who has told you that? Who's told you 5 Q. 6 that, that you're going to get out of priority 7 status? No one. The State lists priority schools, and Q. you're telling me that you believe White's Creek is 10 11 getting out of priority status? 12 We have the potential to do that. 13 0. Now, do you know how long White's Creek 1 4 was in priority status? 15 I don't know what year the list came out. 16 Q. When you say that, what do you mean by 17 that, you don't know the year the list came out? 18 Was it possible that priority status did not exist 19 in previous years, is that what you're saying? 20 Α. The list comes out on a cycle. 21 Q. How long has the designation priority 22 schools existed that you know of? 23 I don't know. Α.

Was it in existence the whole time you've

24

0.

```
1
         Α.
               Yes.
 2
               So that would be from at least 2006, 2008
 3
    through the present date, correct?
 4
               Correct.
         Α.
 5
               Okay. Now, is Robert Miller -- is that a
 6
    high school?
 7
         Α.
               No.
 8
               Do you know of any middle school
         Ο.
    principals who lost their job because the school was
10
    in priority status?
11
         Α.
               I don't know, no.
12
         Ο.
               Do you know of any high school principals
13
    who lost their job because the school was in
1 4
    priority status?
15
         Α.
               I don't know.
16
         Q.
               Were you told by anybody that Dr. Bailey
17
    lost his job for job performance?
18
         Α.
               No.
19
         0.
               Do you know why Dr. Bailey is no longer at
    White's Creek?
20
2.1
         Α.
               No.
2.2
         Q.
               Did you ever work with Dr. Bailey?
23
               We were colleagues.
         Α.
24
               Did you think that your -- did you think
         Q.
25
    Dr. Bailey was a good principal?
```

1 Α. I don't know. 2 Q. Did you think he was professional? 3 Say again. Α. Did you think he was professional? 4 Ο. Did I think he was professional? 5 Α. Yes. 6 Q. 7 Α. Yes. 8 Ο. Did you think he was honest? I don't know. Α. 10 Okay. If there is an issue with your job Q. 11 performance -- are you tenured? 12 Α. Yes. 13 Ο. How long have you been tenured? Α. 1 4 I don't know. 15 Do you know whether or not Metro schools Ο. 16 has the legal ability to just nonrenew your contract 17 if you're tenured? 18 I don't know. 19 Q. Okay. If there is an issue with your job 20 performance, do you know whether or not your 21 supervisor is supposed to address that issue with 2.2 you? 23 Repeat the question. 24 If there is an issue with your job 0. 25 performance, should your supervisor address that

```
1
    with you, bring it to your attention?
 2
         Α.
               Should they, or do they?
 3
         Ο.
               Both.
               I didn't hear what you asked.
 4
 5
         Q.
               If there is an issue with your job
 6
    performance, you're not doing your job right, should
 7
    your supervisor bring that to your attention?
 8
         Α.
               Yes.
               Okay. Are you familiar with something
    called a performance plan?
10
11
         Α.
              Yes.
12
         Ο.
               Is that -- have you ever been on one?
13
         Α.
              No.
1 4
              Do you know whether or not the supervisor
         Q.
15
    is responsible for putting you on a performance plan
16
    if there are issues with your job performance?
17
               The supervisor is responsible.
         Α.
18
         Q.
               Do you know if that's being done with the
19
    hopes that whatever the problem is will correct
    itself?
20
2.1
         Α.
               I don't know.
22
               Were you contacted by anyone about whether
23
    or not Dr. Bailey could be transferred into any
24
    school that you were principal of?
25
         Α.
              No.
```

```
1
         Q.
               Okay. Do you still have your teaching
 2
    license?
 3
         Α.
               Yes.
 4
              Do you have your administrators license?
         Ο.
 5
         Α.
               Yes.
 6
               So you have all the licenses still intact,
         Q.
 7
    correct?
 8
         Α.
              Yes.
               Were you aware that some of the principals
10
    let their teaching license -- that don't need it
11
    anymore so they don't keep that up?
12
               MR. FOX: Objection to the form. (Court
13
    reporter asks for clarification.)
               THE WITNESS: Aware of the license?
1 4
                                                      I was
15
    not aware that principals let their license go.
16
              MS. STEINER: Let's take about five
17
    minutes, is that okay? I'm about ready to end,
18
    okay?
19
               (Brief break observed.)
20
    BY MS. STEINER:
21
         Q.
              Ready?
2.2
         Α.
               Yes.
23
               Dr. Mells, when you were at -- and you
         Q.
24
    were at Madison Middle School before White's Creek,
25
    correct?
```

1 A. Correct.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

- Q. When you were at Madison Middle or White's Creek or Pearl Cohn, did anyone ever tell you that they were going to nonrenew you for job performance?
 - A. No.
- Q. Did anyone ever discuss with you your job performance and counsel with you to tell you that your job performance was not up to par?
 - A. No.
- 10 Q. Did anyone ever put you from Pearl Cohn
 11 through White's Creek on a performance plan?
- 12 A. No.
- Q. Do you know what a nonrenewal is?
- 14 A. Yes.
- Q. What is a nonrenewal?
- 16 A. It depends. There's a nonrenewal meaning
 17 that you will not be in your position for the
 18 upcoming school year.
- 19 Q. Does nonrenewal mean you've lost your job 20 at Metro schools?
- 21 A. It means you have been displaced in your 22 current school.
- Q. Displaced? Does that mean you've got a job for next year?
- 25 A. It depends on the nonrenewal.

```
1
              MR. FOX: Objection to the form.
 2
    BY MS. STEINER:
 3
              Explain to me the different types of
 4
    nonrenewals that you have?
 5
               There is a nonrenewal for rehire;
         Α.
 6
    nonrenewal, not eligible for rehire.
 7
              And those are the two you're aware of,
 8
    correct?
         Α.
              Correct.
10
              Okay. And is the person told that they
11
    are nonrenewed whether or not they are eligible or
12
    not eligible for rehire?
13
         Α.
              Yes.
1 4
              Nonrenewal is not the same as a transfer,
         0.
15
    correct?
16
         Α.
              Correct.
17
              Now, a second ago when you said -- when
18
    you said that you anticipate that White's Creek, and
19
    I may have gotten your words a little off on that,
20
    you anticipate White's Creek would be renewed from
21
    priority status, is that -- do you have some data to
2.2
    support that, or is that your hope as an educator?
23
         Α.
              My hope.
24
              Gotcha. Have you talked to anyone about
         Ο.
25
    giving your deposition today, other than counsel?
```

```
1
               I had to tell my supervisor so she would
 2
    know I would be out of the building.
 3
               That would be Ms. Snorten -- Dr. Snorten?
 4
         Α.
               Yes.
 5
               And do you know of any high school
         Q.
 6
    principals who have been nonrenewed for job
 7
    performance?
               I don't know. Don't know.
 8
         Α.
         Ο.
               Who is your assistant principal?
               Melissa Brooks.
10
         Α.
11
              How long has she been an assistant
         Q.
12
    principal?
13
               I'm sorry?
         Α.
1 4
               How long has she been an assistant
         0.
15
    principal at White's Creek?
16
               Two years.
         Α.
17
               Who was the assistant principal before Ms.
         Q.
18
    Brooks?
19
               They were -- they were before me.
20
    Jeremiah -- I can't think of Jeremiah's last name.
21
    That was the only one that was here before Ms.
2.2
    Brooks.
23
              Was Madison Middle School priority?
         Q.
24
              Yes.
         Α.
25
               That is all, Dr. Mells.
         Q.
```

```
1
             Okay.
          Α.
               MS. HARBISON: Nothing from me.
 2
               MR. FOX: Nothing from Metro. Thank you,
 3
 4
    Dr. Mells.
 5
               FURTHER THIS DEPONENT SAITH NOT
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1	REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION		
2			
3	STATE OF TENNESSEE) COUNTY OF DAVIDSON)		
4	COUNTY OF DAVIDSON)		
5			
6	I, Janie W. Garland, LCR#111, licensed court		
7	reporter, in and for the State of Tennessee do hereby		
8	certify that the above deposition was reported by me		
9	via remote means and that the foregoing pages of the		
10	transcript is a true and accurate record to the best		
11	of my knowledge, skills, and ability.		
12			
13	I further certify that I am not related to nor		
14	an employee of counsel or any of the parties to the		
15	action, nor am I in any way financially interested in		
16	the outcome of this case.		
17			
18	I further certify that I am duly licensed by the		
19	Tennessee Board of Court Reporting as a Licensed		
20	Court Reporter as evidenced by the LCR number		
21	following my name below.		
22	Janie W. Garland		
23			
2 4	Janie W. Garland, LCR#111		
25			

1			
2	ERRATA PAGE		
3			
4	I, Brian Mells, having read the foregoing		
5	deposition, Pages 1 through 47, do hereby certify said testimony is a true and accurate transcript,		
6	with the following changes (if any):		
7	PAGE LINE SHOULD HAVE BEEN		
8			
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21			
22	Brian Mells		
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